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Chamber clarifies goals in five steps

Magic Megaphone process helped Hispanic chamber focus on future

Sacramento Business Journal - by Nick Montoya and Roger S. Peterson

Our last column showed how John the dentist used the Magic Megaphone project management process to expand his practice. But can large organizations and associations gain from these five easy steps? The **Sacramento Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** did.

Last year, SHCC directors were preparing for their annual board retreat where they hoped to develop a long-range strategic plan and to clarify the chamber's mission.

Some directors noticed membership was growing but chamber services and events hadn't changed in years. One director observed that the chamber was stuck in the tyranny of the urgent. They needed to be more responsive to members. That meant expanding services and ensuring the board and paid staff were well-coordinated.

Incoming chairman Paul Galindo bought copies of "The Magic Megaphone" for the directors and asked them to read it prior to a special meeting. At that meeting, we took the board members through the five steps of The Magic Megaphone.

The MegaMission

Past lengthy mission statements consumed hours of work with little recall of the wording. Instead, we asked simple questions: "What is the board of directors of the Sacramento Hispanic Chamber all about? What difference do we want to make for 2007? What's our agenda?"

Within minutes, we defined the MegaMission in one clear phrase: to deliver value through growth. Obviously, chamber membership would not grow without the perceived value of membership, and the value of expanded services could not happen without membership growth.

One of the principles behind the Magic Megaphone is "simple is better." It's much easier for the board to remember and to work with the statement "to deliver value through growth."

The MegaBenefits

In Step Two, we predicted at least 10 benefits that would be realized from a successful MegaMission. But the main MegaBenefits were clear:

- Profitable business for our members
- Increase in exposure, awareness, recognition and respect

We could have listed more MegaBenefits, but we reminded directors of the next principle of the Magic Megaphone: 85 percent is OK. If we received the top benefits, others would naturally follow.

The MegaTargets

Next, we led the directors through Step Three to identify the MegaTargets. The group quickly identified many people and groups who would care or should care about the MegaMission's success. The main MegaTarget was obvious: current members.

The MegaMagic

Now, we asked the board to engage in a moment of fantasy. Specifically, we asked them to imagine they were hidden among the assembled membership and could listen incognito to what members were saying about the board's successful MegaMission. What would be the most ideal sounds of success?

Before we listed these imagined member accolades, we introduced the third principle of the Magic Megaphone: Think Wow! Each praise had to start with the word "wow."

- "WOW! My business has grown tremendously -- thanks to the SHCC."
- "WOW! The SHCC is a well-run organization."
- "WOW! I have to hire more staff, and the banks are finally giving me loans."
- "WOW! What an awesome board of directors."
- "WOW! I want to help, too. How can I?"
- "WOW! They really understand my needs. Their services are right on."
- "WOW! I've got to get A, B and C to join."

The directors were excitedly talking over themselves, so we asked if the list was fairly complete ... at the 85 percent level. They agreed these wows would mean certain success.

The MegaPlan

It all comes together in Step Five. The MegaPlan lists the tasks that will make all the MegaMagic wows audible.

We listed 30 different tasks, but resources were limited. So we voted on the top four:

1. Develop a five-year strategic plan.
2. Hire a marketing/public relations expert.
3. Educate members on networking opportunities.
4. Focus on board members as hosts and role models.

The chamber's Magic Megaphone consumed barely 55 minutes. The process helped the directors realize time was ripe for a strategic plan and a clear chamber identity that would benefit members.

The board used the Megaphone as the basis for the later board retreat that developed the finer details of a strategic plan.

The Results

"Everything listed for 2007 was accomplished," said Diana Borroel, chamber president and chief executive officer. "We reviewed our Megaphone mid-year and continued to use the process for events, such as our annual banquet," she added. The new board will continue using the Magic Megaphone.

We've conducted hundreds of Megaphones at **Intel Corp.**, a complex organization of no-nonsense technical professionals. If it works for engineers and Ph.D.s, it can work anywhere.

Next month: How can a dance instructor expand her studio using the Magic Megaphone?

Nick Montoya and Roger S. Peterson are co-authors of "The Magic Megaphone: How to get your projects unstuck and back on track in under 60 minutes." Visit magicmegaphone.com.

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